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SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT.

BY GEORGE W. E. RUSSELL.

THE Vernons are an ancient and noble race, who came into England with the Conqueror. One of them married an heiress called Venables; his son became Venables-Vernon, and was made Lord Vernon in 1762. This Lord Vernon married Martha Harcourt, granddaughter of Lord Chancellor Harcourt, and heiress of the last Earl Harcourt. The second son of this marriage was the Rev. Edward Venables-Vernon, who was born in 1757, assumed the additional name of Harcourt on succeeding to the estates of his mother's family, was made Bishop of Carlisle in 1791, and Archbishop of York in 1808. This admirable divine had private property to the extent of £10,000 a year: and drew some £40,000 a year from the Church for the space of forty years. He died at the age of ninety; and his character was drawn by the hand of a master in a sketch which is worth reproducing for reasons which will afterwards appear.

"There was a charming kindness and love about him, and simplicity and absence of selfishness. The want was depth—in every way; in intellect, in moral purpose, in sense of responsibility, in concentration of affection. His face quite expressed it; broad, large, yet fine features, nothing gross or low or Rubens-like, but broad and unconcentrated; a man of unbroken prosperity, whom nothing deeply wounded, from whom no crushing would bring out perfume; yet lovable, very, from extreme kindness, simplicity, unaffectedness; chatty, discursive; easily, never deeply, interested; a man to live with, not to die with; for sunshine, not for clouds and storm and dark, dark night; yet quite very lovable."

It was one of the elements of this "unbroken prosperity" that Archbishop Harcourt married Lady Anne Leveson-Gower, daughter of the first Marquess of Stafford—a potentate of the highest renown among the Whigs. And who were the Whigs? and what

was Whiggery? In answering these questions, let me venture to borrow from myself.

Whiggery, rightly understood, was not a political creed but a social caste. The Whig, like the poet, was born, not made. It was as difficult to become a Whig as to become a Jew. Macaulay was probably the only man who, being born outside the privileged enclosure, ever penetrated to its heart and assimilated its spirit. The Whigs, indeed, as a body, held certain opinions and pursued certain tactics which have been analyzed in chapters XIX. and XXI. of the unexpurgated "Book of Snobs." But those opinions and those tactics were mere accidents, though perhaps inseparable accidents, of Whiggery. Its substance was relationship.

When Lord John Russell formed his first administration, his opponents alleged that it was mainly composed of his cousins, and one of his younger brothers was charged with the impossible task of rebutting the accusation in a public speech. Mr. Beresford-Hope, in one of his novels, made excellent fun of what he called "the sacred circle of the great-grandmotherhood." He showed—what, indeed, the Whigs themselves knew uncommonly well—that from a certain Earl Gower, who flourished in the last century, and was great-great-great-grandfather of the present Duke of Sutherland, are descended all the Levesons, Gowers, Howards, Cavendishes, Grosvenors, Russells and Harcourts, who walk on the face of the earth. Truly a noble and highly favored progeny. "They *are* our superiors," said Thackeray; "and that's the fact. I am not a Whig myself (perhaps it is as unnecessary to say so as to say I'm not King Pippin in a golden coach, or King Hudson, or Miss Burdett-Coutts). I'm not a Whig; but oh, how I should like to be one!"

By this illustrious alliance the Archbishop became the father of fourteen Vernon-Harcourts. A lady who married one of them used to say that a Wild Boar, which is the crest of the Vernons, and a Peacock, which is the crest of the Harcourts, were the two most appropriate emblems of her husband's family which could be found in the whole heraldic menagerie. And, indeed, if the Boar symbolizes a rugged disregard of other's feelings, and the Peacock an ostentatious satisfaction with one's own performances, the appropriateness of the badges has not been decreased by lapse of time.

Archbishop Harcourt, like the good Christian that he was,

realized that charity begins at home, and was careful to avoid the censure which the Apostle passes on him who fails to provide for those of his own house. He flourished in the great days of the Anglican Establishment; before the Ecclesiastical Commission had laid its levelling hand on Episcopal incomes, and when an Archbishop's patronage, ecclesiastical and secular, was practically unbounded. Accordingly, all the Vernon-Harcourts were enriched; and among them was the Rev. William Vernon-Harcourt, Canon of York and Rector of the lucrative living of Bolton Percy; who became in 1827, father of William George Granville Venables-Vernon-Harcourt.

The subject of our present study was, therefore, what the Scotch call "a son of the manse." He believed that the happiest days of his life were those which he had passed in the holy privacy of a country parsonage. When Arthur Pendennis gushed over the "long, calm evenings" in the country, George Warrington brutally rejoined: "Devilish long, and a great deal too calm. I've tried 'em!" And Sir William Harcourt "tried 'em" for some eighteen years; for this gentle child of a pastoral home was never subjected to the brutalizing influences of a public school.

It argues no blind faith in a strange system of unnatural restraints and scarcely more reasonable indulgences, to hold that the training of a public school is the best adapted to the common run of Englishmen. "It made us what we were, sir," said Major Bagstock to Mr. Dombey; "we were iron, sir, and it forged us." The average English boy being what he is by nature—"a soaring human boy," as Mr. Chadband called him—a public school simply makes him more so. It confirms alike his characteristic faults and his peculiar virtues, and turns him out, after five or six years, that altogether lovely and gracious product—the Average Englishman. This may be readily conceded; but, after all, the pleasantness of the world as a place of residence, and the growing good of the human race, do not depend exclusively on the Average Englishman; and something may be said for the system of training which has produced, not only all famous foreigners (for they, of course, are a negligible quantity), but such exceptional Englishmen as William Pitt and Thomas Macaulay, and John Keble and Samuel Wilberforce and William Harcourt.

All these famous men went from home to the University; and

in his nineteenth year Mr. W. V. Harcourt became a member of Trinity College, Cambridge. There were giants in those days; and it should always be remembered, to the credit of his powers and his industry, that in 1851 he was placed eighth in the First Class of the Classical Tripos; J. B. Lightfoot, afterwards Bishop of Durham, being Senior Classic.

Immediately after taking his degree, Mr. Vernon-Harcourt came up to London, and entered on a double career of journalism and law.

In 1852 he published anonymously two letters on "The Morality of Public Men," which criticised, in imitation of "Junius," the attempt of the Conservative Government to revive protection. These letters did just what they were intended to do. They did not frighten Lord Derby, nor bring a blush to Mr. Disraeli's hardened cheek. They did not materially contribute to the victory of free trade; but they served an even more important end—they got their author talked about. And what can an ambitious youth desire more? The Whigs made much of their young recruit. He became the oracle of Strawberry Hill, and the spoilt child of Devonshire House. His social talents were soon recognized, and he grew to be a diner-out of established vogue. Meanwhile he was acquiring a good practice at the Parliamentary Bar, where in those days connection and address were more esteemed than legal learning; and his leisure moments were occupied in that rather savage sort of anonymous criticism which was then the stock-in-trade of the "Saturday Review."

In 1859 he made his first attempt to enter Parliament, standing in the Liberal interest for the borough of Kirkcaldy. "We are all the victims of circumstances, and I the greatest," exclaimed Mr. Pickwick in his agony, when Mrs. Bardell accused him of breach of promise of marriage. And Mr. Vernon-Harcourt might well have said the same, for his defeat was, in great part, due to the fury of a novelist who lived in the neighborhood, and who believed, quite erroneously, that the Liberal candidate was the Saturday Reviewer who had scarified his latest novel.

Balked in his Parliamentary ambitions, Mr. Vernon-Harcourt applied himself with redoubled vigor to the bar. He took International Law under his special protection; and, during the American Civil War, he poured himself forth in the "Times" over the signature "Historicus," with such good effect that, a few

years later, he was made Professor of International Law by his own University of Cambridge.

At the General Election of 1868, his great chance arrived. He was returned to Parliament for the City of Oxford; and immediately became an active, able, and rather factious member of the advanced section of the Liberal party. For his official leaders he showed scant respect, and even Mr. Gladstone's towering personality failed to strike him with awe. Just before the downfall of Mr. Gladstone's first administration, he took office as Solicitor-General, and, when it was represented to him that loyalty to leaders was expected in those who have "taken the shilling," he replied that he had only "taken the sixpenny bit." From this it will be rightly inferred that Sir William Harcourt (as he now was) thought highly of himself and his deservings; and an opportunity soon arrived for forcing himself into greater prominence, and at the same time chastising the leader who had offered the sixpenny bit where the shilling was due.

At the beginning of 1874, a General Election took place. The Liberals were beaten, Mr. Disraeli (soon to become Lord Beaconsfield) became Prime Minister with a great majority, and Mr. Gladstone announced his impending retirement from the Liberal Leadership. Sir William Harcourt was not the man to waste his time in unavailing homage to defeated heroes. He was by profound conviction a worshipper of the rising sun and Mr. Disraeli became the subject of his almost oppressive adoration. Archbishop Tait brought in a "Public Worship Regulation Bill," the object of which, abruptly stated by Mr. Disraeli, was "to put down Ritualism." Seeing that it promised to be popular, the Government adopted the bill, and afforded facilities for its consideration. Mr. Gladstone, who had retired to the undisturbed enjoyment of hymnology and Homer, scented the battle from afar, rushed up to London from Hawarden, and offered the bill a strenuous and almost single-handed opposition. The most entertaining passages of arms took place between him and Sir William Harcourt, who had so lately been his Solicitor-General. Sir William had espoused the bill with extraordinary ardor, and, when the House of Lords dealt rather cavalierly with some amendments of the Commons, he implored Mr. Disraeli to take up the cudgels, and expressed his confidence in him in dithyrambic terms:

"We have a leader of this House who is proud of the House of Commons, and of whom the House of Commons is proud. Well may the Prime Minister be proud of the House of Commons, for it was the scene of his early triumphs, and it is still the arena of his later and well-earned glory. . . . We may well leave the vindication of the reputation of this famous assembly to one who will well know how to defend its credit and its dignity against the ill-advised railing of a rash and rancorous tongue."

A provision had been introduced into the bill which would have overthrown the Bishop's right of veto on proceedings against Ritualists, and would have invested the Archbishop with power to institute suits, or allow them to be instituted, in a diocese not his own. This provision Mr. Gladstone vehemently opposed, on the ground that it was contrary to the whole tradition and structure of the Church, and that it was fundamentally inconsistent with the custom of Christendom as regards the relations between Metropolitans and their suffragans. In support of this view he quoted at large from the canonist Van Espen. Sir William Harcourt poured scorn on these citations; was proud to say he had never heard of Van Espen; pooh-poohed all canonists and casuists; adopted Mr. Bright's famous phrase about ecclesiastical rubbish; took the broad and manly ground of common sense, common law, and the Constitution and accused Mr. Gladstone of having come back to wreck the bill at the eleventh hour. Five days afterwards Sir William resumed his discourse. He had got up the case in the mean time, and met Mr. Gladstone on his own ground. He argued the question of canon law. He cited Ayliffe's "*Parergon Juris Canonici Anglicani*," and Burn's "*Ecclesiastical Law*," and sought to show that the power claimed for the Metropolitan was as sound canonically as constitutionally. This unexpected display of erudition gave Mr. Gladstone an opportunity, which he was not slow to use.

He rebuked "the honorable and learned gentleman" for having given one of the most conspicuous and most objectionable examples he had ever known of the vicious practice of discussing speeches delivered in the Lords. And then, referring to Sir William's canonical exertions, he said:

"I confess, fairly, I greatly admire the manner in which he has used his time since Friday night. On Friday night, as he says, he was taken by surprise. The lawyer was taken by surprise, and so was the Professor

of Law in the University of Cambridge; the lawyer was taken by surprise, and, in consequence, he had nothing to deliver to the House except a series of propositions on which I will not comment. I greatly respect the order, and the spirit of the order, of the House, which renders it irregular, as, in my opinion, it is highly inconvenient, especially when there is no practical issue, to revive the details and particulars of a former debate. Finding that he has delivered to the House most extraordinary propositions of law and history that will not bear a moment's examination, my honorable and learned friend has had the opportunity of spending four or five days in better informing himself upon the subject, and he is in a position to come down to this House, and for an hour and a half to display and develop the erudition he has thus rapidly and cleverly acquired. Human nature could not possibly resist such a temptation, and my honorable and learned friend has succumbed to it. . . .

"There is one thing against which this House cannot too much protest—that whenever a man is opposed to you, you should fix upon him a bad name. That is my honorable and learned friend's frequent course. . . . My honorable and learned friend is still in his parliamentary youth: he has not as yet sowed his political wild oats. When he has done so, I have not the smallest doubt that all these great powers which he has developed, and which no one can see in development and exhibition with greater satisfaction than myself, will be found combined with a degree of temper, and wisdom, and consideration for the feelings of others, and with a degree of care in stating the arguments of opponents, that will make him outshine and eclipse them in his eloquence and, if he have opportunity, in his knowledge of Metropolitan Visitation. . . . The main reason why I never will, without necessity, follow my honorable and learned friend into these roads of controversy is this, that I am quite convinced—and let my words be marked—that it is well for this House to consider whether it does or does not desire to maintain a national Establishment of religion in this country. If it is desired to maintain that national Establishment of religion, then I say that moderation in act and temper and mildness of language are absolutely necessary in those who undertake to guide the House on these difficult and perilous questions. But if the tone and the language and the temper of my honorable and learned friend are to be taken as the standard which is in future to govern us in ecclesiastical discussions, I say that, whoever is wrong or whoever is right, there is one result that will override us and pass by us; and that is that the national Establishment of religion will give way under the strokes that will be dealt to it by its most ill-advised defenders."

Thus ended this rather unequal duel and from that time forward Sir William Harcourt never attempted to cross swords with his former chief. On the subject of Ritualism he kept silence, yea even from good words, though it was pain and grief

unto him, until Mr. Gladstone was safely laid in Westminster Abbey.

At the period which we have now reached, close observers of Sir William detected in him some signs of an intention to quit the Liberal party, which was disorganized and feeble, and to attach himself to the conquering standard of Lord Beaconsfield. But the Tory chief had read the "Legend of Montrose," and apparently regarded these overtures much as Lord Menteith regarded those of Major Dugald Dalgetty: "I had scarce patience with the hired gladiator, and yet could hardly help laughing at the extremity of his impudence."

The services which one general rejected, another was glad enough to accept; and this stout soldier of fortune became the sworn adherent of Lord Hartington, now Duke of Devonshire, and then leader of the Liberal party. But soon a new danger threatened. The "Bulgarian Atrocities" of the Turkish Government in 1876 again drew Mr. Gladstone from his retirement. He flung himself into the agitation against Turkey with a zeal which in his prime he had never excelled, if indeed he had ever equalled it. He displayed a versatility, a courage, and a resourcefulness which raised the enthusiasm of his followers to the highest pitch, and filled his guilty and baffled antagonists with a rage akin to frenzy. Lord Hartington, whose mind moved more slowly and uttered itself more cautiously, soon found himself pushed aside from his position of titular command. Though there was a section of the Whigs who doggedly supported Turkey, it soon became evident that, both in the House and in the country, the fervor, the faith, the militant and victorious element in the Liberal party were sworn to Mr. Gladstone's standard. It was just two years since he had resigned the leadership of the party, and he was again its dominating and inspiring influence.

Now this turn of events was by no means agreeable to Sir William Harcourt. The sentiments which he then entertained towards his former chief had been put beyond the pale of doubt by the indiscreet publication of some private correspondence. It was, indeed, highly desirable that Lord Beaconsfield should be dethroned, but supremely undesirable that Mr. Gladstone should reign in his stead. Many and various were the devices designed to avert that catastrophe. Nothing was said: prudence and the memory of the debate on the Public Worship Regulation Bill

forbade it. But much was whispered. Mr. Gladstone was wild, incalculable, irresponsible. He was a fanatic. He was a ritualist. His campaign in Midlothian had cost the party fifty seats. He had retired finally from official life. He had offended the Queen. His health would never stand the burden of a second Premiership; if he took office at all it must be in some subordinate capacity under Lord Hartington. This sweet intrigue, industriously promoted by anonymous writers in the press, went merrily on till Easter, 1880, when Parliament was dissolved, and at the General Election Lord Beaconsfield was beaten by 100. Under these circumstances, no course was constitutionally open to the Queen except to send for Lord Hartington, who was still the titular leader of the Liberal party. If I am correctly informed, Sir William Harcourt was the most strenuous of all the counsellors who urged Lord Hartington to accept the Premiership. But Lord Hartington knew better. Having ascertained that Mr. Gladstone would not serve under him, and naturally shrinking from the prospect of having his former chief as a candid friend and independent critic of his administration, he declined the Queen's commission, and Mr. Gladstone became Prime Minister for the second time. He made Sir William Harcourt his Home Secretary; and it is but bare justice to say that Sir William, having accepted this new service, threw himself into it with his accustomed vigor.

Having rather late in life come out as a Gladstonian Liberal, he blacked himself all over for the part. For the next five years, Sir William was a prominent and valuable member of Mr. Gladstone's administration. His most notable achievement was the Irish Crimes Act of 1882, which, courageously administered by Lord Spencer and Sir George Trevelyan, brought the murderers of Lord Frederick Cavendish to the gallows, and stamped out political crime in Ireland. In the summer of 1885 the Liberals were turned out of office; and the General Election of the ensuing autumn left them still in opposition. The Tories had obtained and kept office by a close alliance with the Parnellite members, and Sir William Harcourt indulged in characteristic pleasantries about his opponents "stewing in Parnellite juice," when, lo! on the 17th of December, 1885, it was announced that Mr. Gladstone had become a Home-Ruler. The Parnellites joined their forces to his and gave him a majority in the House

of Commons. On the 1st of February, 1886, he became Prime Minister for the third time, Sir William Harcourt consenting to be stewed in Parnellite juice and serving under him as Chancellor of the Exchequer. For the next six years, the versatile actor was destined to play another new and very unfamiliar part, and to stand before the astonished world as the Protagonist of Home Rule. In August, 1892, these uncongenial toils were duly rewarded. The General Election had again replaced Mr. Gladstone in power, and with him Sir William Harcourt, who was again Chancellor of the Exchequer. The interior life of Mr. Gladstone's last Cabinet was not that of a happy family. The Wild Boar ravaged the vineyard, and the Peacock uttered discordant cries. As Christian, Countess of Devonshire, wrote to her nephew in 1653: "Where you are of the Choir, there can be no harmony in the Musick." It was known that Mr. Gladstone had taken office only in order to pass the Home Rule Bill through the Commons; and, that task accomplished, he was ready and eager to depart. Who was to succeed him? The Queen's choice seemed practically restricted to two men. In the House of Lords, the leader was a man young as politicians go; clever, judicious, adroit; who had never neglected an opportunity of gaining a friend, and would compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and add even the humblest unit to his personal following. In the House of Commons the leader was a man twenty years older; quite as clever; infinitely better informed; a parliamentarian of unequalled resources; who had never opened his mouth without making an enemy; had trampled on every one who came near him; and under whom no self-respecting colleague could consent to serve. So Lord Rosebery became Prime Minister; and Sir William Harcourt, in spite of high abilities, great achievements, and substantial virtues, missed the supreme prize of public life, because he had never learnt to keep a civil tongue in his head.

Though disappointed of the Premiership, Sir William still contrived to bulk largely in the public eye. As leader of the House of Commons, he controlled the legislative business of Parliament, and he was determined that the session of 1894 should be wholly his. He devoted it to a really great and striking Budget, which did much towards redressing the inequalities of taxation, and placed a proper share of the burden of Empire on

the landowners and the brewers. In piloting this measure through the House of Commons, Sir William, who had always been known as a very clever man, displayed new and unsuspected gifts. He obtained complete mastery over the complicated details of our fiscal system; and, whereas his public speaking had up to that time been the mechanical delivery of carefully written orations, he now developed the much higher power of quick, easy, and dexterous debating.

In the other performance to which, during the Parliament of 1892-5, Sir William Harcourt addressed himself, he was less successful. In his younger days of political independence, he had been a stout opponent of interference with the Liquor Traffic. Indeed, some elephantine jest of his about "grandmotherly legislation" had been adopted by the champions of Unrestricted Beer as their motto and watchword. But here again, as lightly as Dugald Dalgetty passed from the service of the King of Spain to that of the States of Holland, Sir William transferred his sword to the Army of Local Veto; and his blind zeal for the new flag caused his own rejection and the ruin of his party, at the General Election of 1895. After that monumental defeat, he tried for a while to lead the disheartened and disorganized forces of the Opposition; but his heart soon failed him and he disappeared into private life.

Disappeared—but only for a season; for, lo! yet another flag and another cause soon claimed his sword; or, rather, having exhausted all the possibilities of fresh service, he reverted to the standard of 1874, and burst upon the world again as the Champion of No-Popery.

Theological controversy had a peculiar fascination for Sir William Harcourt. It afforded him unequalled opportunities for indulging his special gifts. It enabled him to wound other people in their most sensitive points; and to do so with perfect impunity, as those whom he attacked were bound by their sacred calling to abstain from reprisals. His assaults upon the Ritualistic Clergy of England were in the highest degree ungenerous and indecent. And yet the offender was not wholly without excuse. The mere spectacle of devotion irritated worldliness. Self-sacrifice was a standing reproach to self-seeking. The very sight of men who live for an unpopular cause stings the Soldier of Fortune into a fury which he cannot, if he would, dissemble.

Sir William belonged to the old and exhausted School of Irreligious Liberalism. I mean no reproach to his private character. Like Mr. Squeers, he could justly boast of being "the right shop for morals"; but he belonged to a political school which honestly believed that Religion was the greatest mischief which could befall the individual or the State. "Destroy the Establishment! Why, it's the only thing that stands between us and Religion," cried one prophet of this school. "Things have come to a pretty pass," said another, "when Religion is allowed to invade the sphere of private life." To politicians of this type, Mr. Gladstone's ardent spirituality was an irritating puzzle; and his passionate insistence on the Christian Dogma as a guide of political action filled them with indignation and alarm. But he was indispensable, and they knew it; and so, with rage and grief in their hearts, they bowed to his yoke and followed his leadership; and, as long as Mr. Gladstone remained at the head of the Liberal party, Religion was safe from Liberal attack.

Another excuse for Sir William Harcourt's wrath against "Ritualism" (if one must borrow the nickname of current controversy) is that Ritualism stands for the spiritual independence of the Church, while Sir William was "the last of the Erastians."

"If," wrote Mr. Gladstone in 1876, "we follow the Erastian idea, it does not matter what God we worship, or how we worship Him, provided we derive both belief and worship from the civil ruler, or hold them subject to his orders. Many most respectable persons have been, or have thought themselves to be, Erastians; but the system, in the developments of which it is capable, is among the most debased ever known to man."

Of those "most respectable persons" Sir William Harcourt lived to be the sole survivor; and his performances a few years ago in the Anti-Ritualistic Crusade were the expression of a passionate desire to crush the spiritual life of the English Church, by binding her, in spite of her struggles and protestations, to the chariot-wheels of the English State. It was a criminal and hopeless enterprise, as indeed Sir William, if only he had ears to hear, might have learnt from his old friend and patron Lord Beaconsfield. "The principle that forms Free Kirks is a strong principle, and takes many forms, which the social Polyphemes, who have only one eye, cannot perceive."

In writing this paper I have been on my guard against treating

my subject in a spirit of unqualified eulogy, but I should not satisfy my own sense of justice if I left, as the final impression on my reader's mind, that very unattractive aspect of Sir William Harcourt's character which he displayed in theological disputation. I would now place the picture in other and more becoming lights.

The description of Archbishop Harcourt which I transcribed at the beginning contains not a few elements of resemblance to his grandson. Indeed, when Sir William lectured the recalcitrant clergy, I always felt that atavism is responsible for much, in that, being an Archbishop's grandson, he could not see a curate go astray, without an instinctive desire to punish him. It would be insidious to indicate the special qualities in which Sir William most closely resembled his grandfather, or those in which the resemblance was less distinct. Physically, the resemblance was almost a reproduction; and morally there were many points of similitude.

Even in respect of temper, Sir William's bark was worse than his bite; or, if I may use again the heraldic metaphor which has helped us so often, his grunt was worse than his tusk. In spite of all that has come and gone, and without retraction of anything that I have written, I affirm that he was fundamentally affectionate, generous and humane. He had a generous zeal for Peace, Freedom and Temperance. About his cleverness and his accomplishments there can be no two opinions. He was thoroughly well read, and his general culture rested on a broad and firm foundation of classical scholarship. He had the "*Corpus Poetarum*" and Shakespeare and Pope at his fingers' ends, and his acquaintance with the political history of England elicited a characteristic compliment from Lord Beaconsfield. It was his favorite boast that, in all his tastes, sentiments, and mental habits, he belonged to the eighteenth century, which he glorified as the golden age of reason, patriotism and liberal learning. This self-estimate strikes me as perfectly sound, and it requires a very slight effort of the imagination to conceive this well-born young Templar wielding his doughty pen in the Bangorian Controversy, or declaiming on the hustings for Wilkes and Liberty; bandying witticisms with Sheridan, and capping Latin verses with Charles Fox; or helping to rule England as a member of that "*Venetian Oligarchy*" on which Lord Beaconsfield lavished

all the vials of his sarcasm. In truth, it is not fanciful to say that whatever was best in the eighteenth century—its robust common sense, its racy humor, its thorough and unaffected learning, its ceremonious courtesy for great occasions, its jolly self-abandonment in social intercourse—was exhibited in the demeanor and conversation of Sir William Harcourt. He was an admirable host, and, to borrow a phrase from Sydney Smith, “received his friends with that honest joy which warms more than dinner or wine.” As a guest, he was a splendid acquisition, always ready to amuse and to be amused, delighting in the rapid cut-and-thrust of personal banter, and bringing out of his treasure things new and old for the amusement and benefit of a later and less instructed generation.

Some of Sir William’s quotations are so extraordinarily apt that they deserve a permanent place in the annals of table-talk. That fine old country gentleman, the late Sir Rainald Knightley, who was the living double of Dickens’s Sir Leicester Dedlock, had been expatiating after dinner on the undoubted glories of his famous pedigree. The company was getting a little restive under the recitation, when Sir William was heard to say, in an appreciative aside: “This reminds me of Addison’s evening hymn—

‘And Knightley to the listening earth
Repeats the story of his birth.’”

Surely, the force of apt citation can no further go. When Lord Tennyson chanced to say in Sir William’s hearing that his pipe after breakfast was the most enjoyable of the day, Sir William softly murmured the Tennysonian line:

“The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds.”

Some historians say that he substituted “bards” for “birds,” and the reception accorded by the poet to the parody was not as cordial as its excellence deserved.

GEORGE W. E. RUSSELL.